Communications for Small Teams

written by Nick Meacher | June 24, 2021

As we discussed in last month's issue of Survival Dispatch Insider, communications are very impo Not only your communications but other people's as well. It's important when on patrol around th Area of Action) to be able to keep in touch with the base periodically as well as your own team. W a patrol you ideally want to keep everyone in visual sight and use hand signals. You don't want to your position away by talking. Also, don't give an adversary the advantage of signals or communic intelligence (SIGINT & COMINT) by making constant transmissions.

Use of Radios

Ideally, everyone will have a radio set up for short distance communications when on patro s

use this mistake by others below.

The radio should be in some kind of protective case and in a high rain area should be protected fr wet. If you're in a populated area just moving around amongst friendlies, your radio should be se such a way that the display isn't visible. You don't want to make it too easy for people to see what frequency it's on. Ideally the entire radio shouldn't be visible as knowing the make and model will down the possible frequencies you are using. Avoid anything that makes it easier and quicker for someone to find out what frequency you're using. You also want to set your radio so the backligh all the time. You don't want it coming on at night and lighting up like a beacon!

You should also have a rotating set of frequencies to use. Change them every day or two, or even few hours depending on the situation. The pattern should be known to all in the team as well as y home unit so they can monitor in case you call for backup. Rite in the Rain notepads are best for t should only be good for a single patrol in case it's compromised. The frequencies should have a n number you refer to them by so that the frequency is never given on the air. You should also hav

Depending on how far the patrol is and if yo moving from one location to another with yo whole team, a higher power radio for longer communications may be needed. This could low power (QRP) HF capable radio such as the Yaesu FT-817ND which is designed for m packing. It also has VHF and UHF capabilities

If that's too much weight then you can impro performance of your HT by adding a light we ladder line J-pole and a pig tail (as discussed months issue on communications). There are designs on the internet to make them yo including YouTube, or you can buy them pre made for about $25. Carry a length of light li a weight to hoist it up over a tree limb. The c t ink comes with 10ft coax, but you can contact the seller and ask for a longer length. Rememb er your antenna the further the signal will go. Also remember one is none, two is one.

As we also mentioned in last month's edition, the use of a Yagi antenna will direct more of your si the direction it is pointed AND make it harder for those not in the direct path to detect you. We pr links to build simple fold up ones in last month's magazine and you can find them all over the inte They're very simple to make.

A Yagi antenna can be used to direction find in the same way as it transmits. You'll hear a stronge from the direction it's pointed. This is useful for eavesdropping on someone when you know their frequency. You can also use it to find out exactly where they are. Direction finding from a couple different locations can triangulate someone's position.

As always, keep your transmissions brief when there is any possibility of someone trying to find y codewords for locations when legal to do so, which is just good COMSEC and OPSEC. If you're doi recon of a potentially hostile area or group you should never transmit unless under fire. Ha

or a patrol requires very specific skills that I'm sure we'll address in a future article.

Signs and Signals

The most common hand signals I've seen posted on internet sites are the ones used by SWAT teams. They address urban tactics and the needs f SWAT operations. When doing patrols, infantry hand s may be more appropri Such things as formatic staggered column, ech or right, line, wedge, V, assembly/rally, enemy etc. are needed for pat that would not normall used in SWAT tactics. T manual for this inform that I've found in the Department of the Arm is Visual Signals training manual TC 3-21.60.

Other signs that you should look out for when travelling are signs left by hobos. I've read articles t indicate in the past number of years there are more people choosing the lifestyle. There are incre numbers of veterans who aren't being taken care of and become homeless. But this particular art referred to millennials who are choosing to live that way. I've no way to verify if the various charts hobo symbols found on the internet are real or not. However, I will say that many years ago wher in my 20's I was fortunate enough to take a 2 week course in wilderness escape and surviva

Ranging & Intel Gathering

When coming across indications of another group while patrolling, it's important to gather as mu as possible. Noticing a trail that has been used recently, broken branches, flattened grass, or the of cooking are all things you should notice. Even in your own area you need to mark key points ar markers. The way to do this is with a range card. While primarily for snipers, it can be used to ma area where there is an adversary or another group so you have a map. The ranging cards are ava in Rite In The Rain paper. The range card indicates distance and direction from your position plus relative fixed points. Items of known height should also be indicated as these can be used for ran Indications of any communications equipment should be included, such as antennas and their ty (vertical, long wire, beams, etc.) as these could indicate the type of comms they have. If you can s radios personnel are carrying try to determine make and model. If you're close enough or have g optics, try to see what frequency they're on if not practicing good OPSEC.

An excellent monocular to assist with this is the Vortex Solo R/T monocular with MRAD rang J

Final Thoughts

Communications during small patrols can seem complicated at first. With a little training and rese you can learn a lot from the available information. In a SHTF scenario, it will be lifesaving to communicate with your group without giving any information. Knowing communications systems also let you use information about other groups if they're sloppy enough to give it.

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Our resident communications specialist with over 25 years radio experience. He i of the country's leading experts in communications, having trained multiple government, military and law enforcement agencies.

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